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OCI No. 1516/65
2 May 1965

NOTES FOR CIA BRIEFING
FOR CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS
AT THE WHITE HOUSE
6:30 PM Sunday, 2 May 65

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THE DOMINICAN SITUATION

I. BACKGROUND

The revolt in the Dominican Republic in essence started as an attempt by junior officers to throw out Donald Reid Cabral and the provisional government which has been running the country since the military deposed President Juan Bosch in September 1963.

A. Bosch was elected President in December 1962, with 58 percent of the popular vote. He proved to be somewhat of an impractical idealist who was not coping effectively with the country's problems. On top of that, he was very tolerant of the Communists as long as they did not oppose his plans. When he refused to take action to curb the Communists, and instead attempted to dismiss the Chief of Staff, General Wessin y Wessin, the military leaders removed Bosch.

B. The present revolt against the Reid regime was also started by the military, but this time by more junior officers, on such issues

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- C. There is very little doubt that elements of the Bosch party, the left-of-center Dominican Revolutionary Party, were involved with the junior officers early in the planning.
- D. When the revolt came, the senior military officers took no action at first because they had been quarreling with Donald Reid Cabral and were willing to see him go. By the time they stopped to think who would succeed Reid, it was too late to snuff the revolt out quickly.
1. The leaders of the revolt by this time were demanding the return of Bosch. They believed this would cause the high command to move against them, so they began arming civilians indiscriminately.
 2. It appears that most of the civilians who obtained weapons at that time are responsive to the leadership of three political parties controlled by the Communists--the orthodox Communist party under a cover

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name, a pro-Peiping group, and a pro-Castro group.

E. The rebel military leadership, apparently headed by Colonel Caamano, is still demanding the return of President Bosch, and now claims to control 25,000 armed men. (This figure appears greatly exaggerated.) Most of the muscle of the revolution is Communist or pro-Communist, and if Bosch should be returned to office, he will not only be more indebted to the Communists than he was before, but in very poor position to move against them if he should realize the necessity.

II. THE PRESENT SITUATION

(MAP, SANTO DOMINGO)

It took the commanders of the three armed services about 48 hours to decide to move against the revolt, and by that time the rebels were solidly entrenched in the old quarter of the capital--the waterfront along the Ozama River and the Caribbean. They held the Duarte Bridge, the only access from the east into the capital.

A. General Wessin had about 1,700 men in the Armed Forces Training Center at San Isidro. By the time he moved, he was down to about

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1,250 men, and only a hundred or so finally forced the barricaded Duarte Bridge and established a foothold in the city proper, where they held out for three days without support or food.

- B. Brigadier General Montas took about 200 men from a regimental headquarters at San Cristobal and pushed through the city into the National Palace, from which point the high command finally proclaimed a junta of three officers, headed by Air Force Colonel Benoit, to succeed Donald Reid Cabral. The Montas force appears to have abandoned the National Palace late yesterday, and we are not sure where it has gone.
- C. The Army Chief, Rivera Cuesto, has about 400 men in the northwestern part of the city, and Montas may have linked up with him.
- D. There are about 1,200 naval combat troops deployed around the fairgrounds on the southwestern outskirts of the city.
- E. There are some 2,400 members of the national police guarding their own headquarters and the radio station providing their communications

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[redacted]

with the rest of the country. This is all the effective police force remaining in the capital since the rebels last Friday took the Ozama Fortress where a large detachment of police had been holed up. Unfortunately, along with the fortress the rebels also acquired an arsenal reported to include about 3,000 weapons, mainly machineguns, which have undoubtedly been distributed to civilians.

F. In other words, government forces in the capital amount at most to something more than 5,000 men, scattered, demoralized, out of communication, untrained for street-fighting, and getting very little organized leadership from the senior military officers.

III. We have no firm information on how many armed rebels there now are in the city. I mentioned a rebel claim of 25,000. [redacted] says he saw two to three thousand armed civilians in the southeast portion of the city last night. The actual strength probably lies somewhere in between.

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IV. At mid-day today we had about 3,000 Marines and 5,000 paratroopers of the 82nd Airborne Division in the Dominican Republic. The Marines are deployed along a phase line covering the international

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safety zone established in the city at the suggestion of the OAS. A detachment guarding the US Embassy has been under sporadic sniper fire, which has been returned. The Marines so far have had 2 killed and 20 wounded. They have killed at least two and probably four snipers.

- A. The paratroopers were flown into San Isidro starting early Friday morning, and have been deployed along the Ozama River and into the Duarte bridgehead which Wessin's men have given up.
- B. Yesterday the paratroopers sent a patrol through the city to make contact with the Marines. Most of the army casualties--one or possibly two killed, and 16 wounded--were incurred during this patrol. The gap between the paratroopers and the Marines, represented by the dotted green line on the map, is still open.
- V. The interior of the country is generally calm. The Communists appear to hold two points on the main road from Santo Domingo to Santiago, the second largest city, but there have been no attacks on army or police installations. So far, there are no indications that the bulk of the army's infantry

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battalions, deployed around the country and along the Haitian frontier, have been given any orders to take action.

- VI. The rebel forces effectively dominate downtown Santo Domingo at present, but neither the rebels nor the loyalists appear to have the ability or the means to form an effective instrument of national control, or to defeat the opposing force.
- A. The loyalist forces hardly have the capability to enforce the cease fire.
- B. The rebels cannot significantly expand their position as long as US forces remain. They can, however, consolidate the control of what they now have, while they seek to stimulate support in the interior of the country, which so far has not manifested itself.

- VII. Latin American reaction to date has been relatively restrained. There is the natural reaction against intervention by US armed forces, but this is tempered, at least in the private remarks of Latin American officials, to the extent that they recognize the dangerous role the extreme leftists are playing in the Dominican revolt.
- A. The Latin American governments generally, however, have little sympathy for the military

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[REDACTED]

commanders on the loyalist side, and awareness of President Bosch's shortcomings is limited to a few leaders like Betancourt and Figueres.

- B. As a result, there will be great reluctance to undertake any action to put down the armed leftists forcibly, and any increased activity by US forces now in the Dominican Republic would probably result in an almost universal condemnation and protests about "gunboat diplomacy."
1. This reaction might be averted if the armed rebels should become aggressive and persist in violations of the cease-fire agreement. For one thing, the Latin American diplomats who are actually in Santo Domingo are openly disenchanted if not actually hostile to the rebels.
 2. One of the original military leaders of the revolt, Colonel Miguel Hernando, took asylum Saturday in the Ecuadoran Embassy. The Ecuadoran Ambassador says that Hernando is out of his mind and virtually raving, so that there is no point in trying to interview him at present. Information of this type may help convince Latin American governments

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that they should be more concerned about another Cuba than their fears of "gun-boat diplomacy."

VIII. COMMUNIST INVOLVEMENT

We have so far identified, among the participants in the revolt and the general fighting, more than 65 men listed by name who had been exiled from the Dominican Republic in the past as extreme leftists. Most of them have been in Cuba or in Communist bloc countries during their exile, and we know that a number of them have received extensive training in guerrilla warfare and street-fighting. These men are playing an important role in organizing the mobs, propagandizing, and leading the paramilitary formations.

- A. One of the key leaders is Manuel Gonzalez Gonzalez, a Spanish Communist who fought in the Spanish Civil War, came to the Dominican Republic in 1940, and has been a top official of the Communist Party in recent years.
- B. One of the Communist parties in the Dominican Republic is the 14th of June Movement, a pro-Castro group. Within one or two hours of the first rebel moves, members of this group were in the streets urging the

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population to come out and demonstrate for the return of Bosch.

- C. Members of the orthodox Communists in the early hours of the coup got a sizable quantity of arms and ammunition from the arsenal of an army camp outside of town commanded by rebel officers, moved back into town and took control of the barrios, or slums. They organized strongpoints and paramilitary squads.
- D. Even when the cease fire was proclaimed, two known Communists began circulating handbills warning the public not to be "tricked" and urging armed civilians to retain their arms until Bosch returns.
- E. It was developments such as these which caused leaders of Bosch's party who had originally planned the rebellion along with the disgruntled junior officers to take asylum and renounce their leadership.
- F. We have had a number of reports that the Communists are popularizing the Castro war-cry, "Al paredon---to the execution wall"--and are shooting numbers of police and military officers who fall into their hands on the spot. Some neutral officials have been able to visit prison

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camps where the rebels are holding captured police officers. These officials have not confirmed any executions, but note that one prison camp is commanded by a leader of the pro-Castro 14th of June Movement.

- G. On April 28, armed rebels broke into and looted three banks, including the branches of the First National City Bank of New York and the Royal Bank of Canada, each of which reportedly had about \$250,000 cash on hand. This is a standard Castro tactic recommended to Latin American guerrillas.
- H. Offices of anti-Communist newspapers and anti-Communist political parties have also been sacked by leftist-led mobs.
- IX. Competent observers on the scene estimate that the Communists in Santo Domingo now are armed and dug in to the extent that there is no local force with the capability and training to dig them out in house-to-house fighting. The implication is that if this job has to be done, it will have to be done by foreign troops, American or Latin American.

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The attached Briefing Notes are being circulated to participants in the Director's morning meeting in accordance with DCI's request this morning.

OCI Presentation Staff

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20 May 1965